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20 October 1947

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, R & E

Subject: "National Situation Reports"

References: (a) Memorandum for the Director from the Chief,
ICAPS, 3 October 1947.
(b) Memorandum for the Asst. Dir., R&E, from the
Exec. Dir., 8 October 1947.

1. Since Reference (a) was prepared and submitted to the Director without reference to O.R.E., whose function it is to advise him regarding its subject, the decision of the Director referred to in Reference (b) must be presumed to be tentative and subject to reconsideration on advice from O.R.E.

2. Reference (a) is replete with absurdities which need not be discussed in detail, but which should be noted as further evidence of the absolute inexperience of ICAPS personnel in matters relating to the production of intelligence estimates and their ignorance of actual O.R.E. production.

3. Since the recommendations of Reference (a) are based on a confused and ambiguous account of the origin of the Situation Report Series, a more accurate review of that development is pertinent. Three (rather than two) lines of thought were involved, to wit:

a. O.R.E. projection of a new series to provide a resume of the basic or quasi-permanent factors in given situations, obviating the need for detailed discussion of such factors in the ORE Series. The latter series would continue to be used to respond to special requests or to make special report on important emergent trends perceived by O.R.E. Relying upon basic coverage in the Situation Report Series, items in the ORE Series could be confined to a concise and direct discussion of the immediate problem.

b. A request by O.N.I. for a new series of descriptive studies of various national situations for the purpose of general orientation. This concept differed from that above in its emphasis upon a descriptive rather than an analytical approach and upon geographical and sociological factors.

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c.  insistence upon a series designed to serve

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Departmental rather than Cabinet-level needs, addressed to readers below the I.A.B. level, and to be revised monthly, becoming in effect a series of monthly current intelligence publications on a country by country basis in lieu of the Weekly Summary.

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4. The conflict of concept to which [REDACTED] refers in Reference (a), para. 2, is not actually between the O.R.E. and O.N.I. concepts, as he suggests, but between them and his own previous notions. O.R.E. has actually accomplished a reconciliation of the first two. The Situation Report Series, as now produced, is designed to accomplish primarily the original purpose of O.R.E. and incidentally that of O.N.I. [REDACTED] ideas, however, have not been implemented to the extent that they were impracticable as well as inappropriate.

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5. So far as the Situation Report Series is concerned, the effect of [REDACTED] present recommendations is merely to withdraw his previous insistence on the points indicated in para. 3 c above. That is all to the good, but requires no radical revision of the concept inasmuch as those ideas had been disregarded anyhow. What remains is merely a change in the name of the Series to "Brief Studies." If [REDACTED] were at all familiar with the Series he would realize that "Brief Studies" is hardly the word for it.

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6. The only significant innovation proposed in Reference (a) is the production of a new series of six-page "National Situation Reports" in accordance with a proposed outline. This Series would be used for both scheduled production and in response to specific requests. The proposal is objectionable, in general, on the ground that the indicated coverage is already provided for in the Summaries covering reports in the SR Series and in the ORE Series, which are the proper media for the purpose. Particular objections follow:

a. The main headings of the proposed outline are identical with the main headings of the Situation Reports. The "National Situation Reports" would therefore be but a briefer statement of the substance of the Situation Reports. But that is what the Summaries are designed to accomplish with greater flexibility of form and with the immediate availability of the Report itself for further reference. Separate publication of expanded Summaries, which is what the "National Situation Reports" would be, would produce a series of doubtful adequacy without compensatory advantage.

b. Incidentally, the subheadings of the proposed outline are totally inadequate as a checklist or guide and are, for the most part, expressed in unintelligible jargon.

c. As to the title, to what does "National" refer? If

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to the function of the C.I.A., that is covered by the name of the Central Intelligence Agency on the cover. If to the subject matter, it would be inappropriate to a regional estimate or to an estimate regarding a particular aspect of a national situation.

d. It is ridiculous to prescribe a priori the outline for a response to a specific request. The fact that the first requests from the National Security Council were in terms of the current situations in certain countries does not preclude eventual requests for special estimates of both a broader and a more specific nature. The proper medium for responses to specific requests is the unscheduled ORE Series, in which cognizance may be taken of the specific occasion for the request.

7. Recommendations:

a. That, as a fundamental question of confidence, the Director be urged to rely upon O.R.E. for advice on matters of intelligence production, in recognition of both its professional experience and its organizational function.

b. That, in the instant case, he be requested to rescind Reference (b) and to refer Reference (a) to O.R.E. for information and appropriate action.

c. That O.R.E. adhere to the concept set forth in paragraph 3 a:

(1) Continuing to use the ORE Series for responses to specific requests.

(2) Continuing the SR Series as presently constituted, but addressing it to a higher level of readership and dropping the idea of regular periodic revision.

(3) Not establishing any other Series until there has been a convincing demonstration of the need for it.

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Chief, Global Survey Group

cc Asst. Dir., ORE
Planning & Policy Staff
Estimates Group
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